

One Bike Commuter's Story

My story - the year is 2001. This was not a Space Odyssey. This was real life and I was turning 50. I was closing a generation of not paying much attention to my physical fitness. **It was time to change.**

Two more things occurred that said "ride your bike to work:" First, there was no longer free employee parking for cars at the Capitol Complex. And in addition, my son was a driver with lots of places to go besides high school itself.



In other words, there were three big factors that called for a change in my commute style: I would tone my body (having turned 50) as I biked my way to work (free parking for bikes) and my son would use my former commute car for his multi-destinational needs.

Six years later, I still commute to work by bike nine months a year. I avoid the need even for my own parking during the cold months by belonging to a carpool that another employee drives. For the occasional times when parking is necessary (such as leaving early for a medical appointment) I use tokens at a street meter.

The commute to work is five miles. This gives me almost a whole hour of aerobic exercise round trip five days a week. It takes longer than driving but is time that I don't have to spend going somewhere to exercise. I can't pick up bags of groceries on the way home, but I often stop for a few things that I put into my shoulder bag. My change of clothes also goes into the shoulder bag.



DMB provides free parking in bike racks inside and outside of the Complex buildings. I park in the upper level. When it rains after I arrive at work I can ride home with my carpool and come back for the bike the next day, knowing that it's safe. The building management also provided a detector loop so that bicyclists can use the underground parking entrance with an ID card. Pedestrians can't do this because there has to be a mass of metal to trigger the door opener.

My commute bike is a Raleigh triple-chain wheel hybrid that has upright handlebars and a soft seat. It is more suited for city streets than a Road Bike. For long tours, I have my lightweight carbon-frame road bike with down-handlebars. I use that bike for tours.

About tours: In that critical year of 2001, I also resumed bike touring. My new-driver son joined me on PALM - Pedal Across Lower Michigan. This was the 20th PALM ride. I had gone on PALM 3 and 4. PALM is promoted as a "family ride" and it lasts six days consisting of 35 to 55 miles per day with two options up to 100 miles.

The high-achiever non-family alternative to PALM is DALMAC, or Dick Allen Lansing to Mackinac tour which ends every year the day before Labor Day. The Tri-county Bike Association of Lansing operates this tour. DALMAC has five distinct routes. If you want to join the most popular one of them, you may be too late already in February. DALMAC routes have a minimum daily mileage in the 60's. Two of the tours have 100 miles per day. I have gone on the last five DALMAC's.

Having a tour at the end of the summer provides a motivation to do a lot of condition riding until then. Four to six of us "old guys" meet on weekends and evenings and go for two-to-three hour rides to get ready for the Big Tour. We have had our joint replacements and gall bladder removals, and get back on the bike. When our backs can't take the strain anymore we buy recumbents.



"When we can't find the time to work and ride bikes, we retire. Retirees that I know who have a regular exercise program are healthier and happier than those who don't."

Art Slabosky